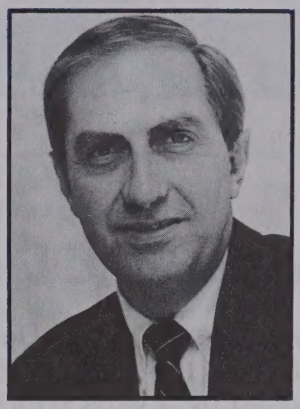
CONGRESSMAN

Joel Hefley

Special Report on AIDS



5th District
Colorado

October 1987

JOEL HEFLEY
FIFTH DISTRICT
COLORADO

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

Dear Friends:

The information contained in this newsletter may be disturbing to some of you. However, as your Representative, it is incumbent upon me to report to you the most recent findings concerning AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and also how you can help combat this silent killer.

It has been six years since we first started hearing about AIDS. Now, it has become a national crisis warranting a national policy to fight against it. AIDS no longer affects only homosexuals, bisexuals and intravenous drug users. This deadly virus has painfully taken the lives of many innocent people without warning and without reason. Although the percentage of infected heterosexuals, including infants, remains low, we cannot allow this epidemic to continue. Despite the millions of dollars we've spent on researching the virus, there is still no known cure.

One potential cure we are aware of, however, is education. Only through education and prevention can we stop the spread of AIDS. October is "National AIDS Prevention and Awareness Month" as well as "AIDS Awareness Month" in Colorado, and I hope you will all join me in learning the facts about AIDS. Although AIDS may never touch you personally, it is having a tremendous impact on your life as the spread of this fatal disease continues to lead to drastic economic, political and social changes.

I urge you to carefully read this newsletter. Its contents just may save your life.

Sincerely,

Joel Hefley

IMPORTANT FAC

Definition

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the final stage of a health problem caused by a virus (HIV) that attacks the body's immune system. As a result, the body no longer has the natural ability to fight diseases and so often falls victim to various forms of cancer, pneumonia and other diseases.

Transmission

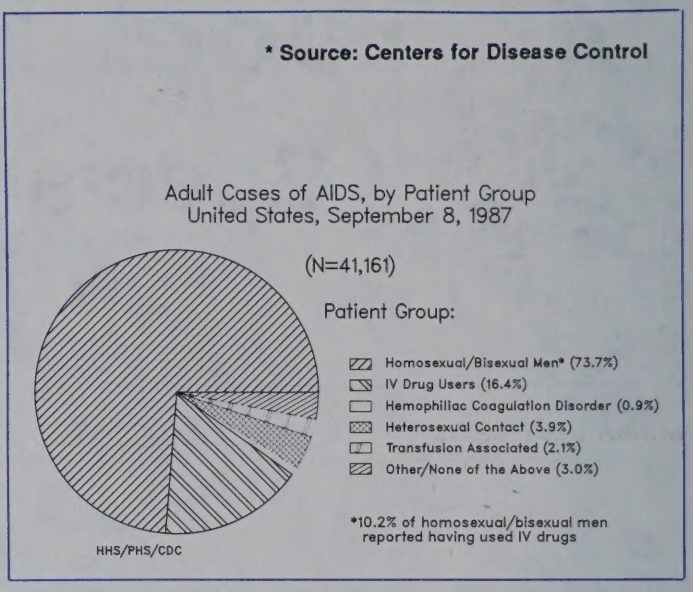
The AIDS virus lives in bodily fluids such as semen, vaginal fluid and blood. It is most often transmitted through intimate sexual contact with an infected person but can also be contracted by receiving AIDS-contaminated blood through a blood transfusion, and by sharing hypodermic needles used to inject drugs. AIDS can also be passed from an infected mother to her baby.

Most authorities believe that AIDS cannot be transmitted through casual social contact. They believe the AIDS virus dies when exposed to air making it difficult to catch by simply being around an AIDS carrier. It is believed that no one has ever caught AIDS by casual kissing, hugging, shaking hands or by sharing bed linens, towels, cups, straws, or eating utensils. And despite widespread myths, no one has ever caught AIDS from a toilet seat, a doorknob, a swimming pool or a hot tub.

Signs and Symptoms

The incubation period between infection with the AIDS virus and the onset of symptoms can range from about six months to five years or more. Symptoms of illness appear in approximately 30 percent of individuals within five years of infection. The remainder show no symptoms and may never contract the disease, although they may still infect others. Some who contract the virus may develop AIDS Related Complex (ARC), a less serious form of AIDS.

The most common symptoms of AIDS include tiredness, loss of appetite, enlarged lymph nodes, fever, weight loss, diarrhea and shortness of breath. These are usually associated with pneumonia and other diseases that strike AIDS victims and may include purplish blotches and bumps on the skin as signs of certain types of cancer. AIDS can also affect the nervous system and damage the brain. Infection with the virus may not always lead to AIDS.


* Source: Centers for Disease Control
Adult Cases of AIDS, by Patient Group
United States, September 8, 1987
(N=41,161)
Patient Group:
Homosexual/Bisexual Men* (73.7%)
IV Drug Users (16.4%)
Hemophiliac Coagulation Disorder (0.9%)
Heterosexual Contact (3.9%)
Transfusion Associated (2.1%)
Other/None of the Above (3.0%)
*10.2% of homosexual/bisexual men reported having used IV drugs
HHS/PHS/CDC

Treatment

Although there is currently no known cure for AIDS, scientists are working almost around the clock in an attempt to develop an AIDS vaccine.

A drug called AZT (azidothymidine) apparently prolongs the life of some AIDS patients with fewer medical complications, though it is not a cure for the disease. AZT has only been studied for a short period of time so the long-term effectiveness of the drug is unknown. AZT does cause a reduction in red blood cells which can be a serious side effect. The cost of the drug ranges between $7,000 and $14,000 per year per patient.

AIDS in America

About 1.5 million people in America are estimated to be infected with the AIDS virus. Between 20 and 30 percent of those infected with the virus will actually develop the disease. To date, the number of persons known to have

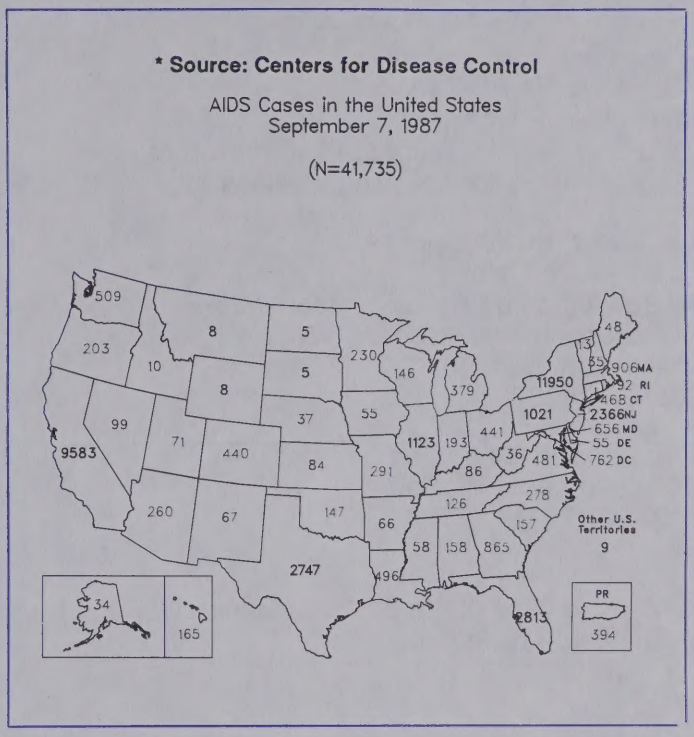
TS ABOUT AIDS

AIDS is more than 25,000. About half of those diagnosed have already died and the rest are expected to die eventually. According to the Surgeon General, AIDS is 100 percent fatal.

Colorado currently ranks 17th among the 50 states in reported cases, with a mortality rate of almost 60 percent at this time. Colorado was also one of the first states to enact "reportability" legislation requiring doctors and laboratories to report the names of those who test positive for the HIV virus to the State Department of Health.

Who has AIDS?

The AIDS virus most commonly infects persons who engage in known high-risk behavior, such as certain homosexual practices or the sharing of intravenous drug needles and syringes. Those who engage in sexual relations with multiple partners run a higher risk of exposure to the AIDS virus than does someone who engages in a monogamous relationship.



HEFLEY-SPONSORED AIDS INITIATIVES

— H.R. 344, a bill requiring any individual imprisoned in a Federal correctional institution or in a correctional facility which receives Federal funds, and any individual seeking permanent residence in the United States to be tested for AIDS or the HTLV-III/LAV virus. Also requires any individual identified as an AIDS carrier to be notified and counseled about the risks of spreading the disease.

— H.R. 758, a bill to establish a National Commission on AIDS to advise Congress, the President and Federal agencies on policies and programs to reduce the incidence of AIDS and address problems encountered by it; monitor the progression of AIDS; evaluate AIDS research activities and health services; study the effects that AIDS has had on the armed forces; and identify financial resources available to prevent and treat AIDS. Requires the Commission to report to the President and Congress and terminates the Commission 90 days after submitting the report.

Also, anyone who received a blood transfusion prior to 1985, when all blood began being screened for AIDS antibodies, is considered to be at some risk for infection. As little as one unit of blood is enough to transmit the disease. The chances of contracting AIDS from a blood transfusion, however, are currently estimated to be about 1 in 10,000.

Heterosexuals are also at risk and should exercise extreme caution before engaging in any casual sexual relations.

Prevention

Until an effective cure is found, education and prevention are the only ways to stop the rampant spread of AIDS. People can protect themselves and others by avoiding activities that spread the disease. If you have engaged in high risk sexual activities or injected drugs, you should consult your doctor immediately and have a blood test to see if you have been infected with the AIDS virus. Persons in high risk categories should not donate blood.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION...

If you believe that you are at risk of contracting AIDS or if you would just like additional information about the AIDS virus, the numbers listed below can help.

U.S. Public Health Service
National AIDS Hotline
1-800-342-2437 for recorded information or
1-800-443-0366 for specific questions

U.S. Public Health Service
Public Affairs Office
Hubert Humphrey Building, Room 725-H
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20201
(202) 245-6867

National Gay Task Force
AIDS Information Hotline
1-800-221-7044

Colorado AIDS Project
1577 Clarkson
Denver, CO 80218
(303) 837-0166

Southern Colorado AIDS Project
(303) 578-9092

Colorado AIDS Awareness Month Hotline
(only during month of October)
(303) 830-AIDS or
1-800-333-AIDS

To obtain a copy of the Surgeon General's Report on AIDS, you write directly to:

SURGEON GENERAL'S REPORT ON AIDS
P.O. Box 23961
Washington, D.C. 20026-3961

CONGRESSMAN HEFLEY'S OFFICES

WASHINGTON, D.C.
508 Cannon HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 225-4422

COLORADO SPRINGS
2190-A Vickers Drive
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80918
(303) 531-5555

LITTLETON
10394 West Chatfield Avenue
Suite 104
Littleton, Colorado 80127
(303) 933-0044

IMPORTANT HEALTH INFORMATION INSIDE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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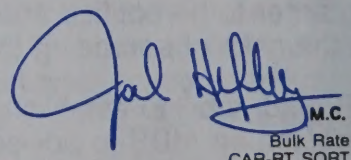

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